



# San Diego City Attorney **CASEY GWINN**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**PRESIDENT BUSH ANNOUNCES CREATION OF  
FAMILY JUSTICE CENTERS FOR  
VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,  
MODELED AFTER THE SAN DIEGO FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**  
*San Diego City Attorney Gwinn is honored for his leadership*

**San Diego, CA:** At a White House event this afternoon, marking "Domestic Violence Awareness Month," President George W. Bush recognized San Diego's Family Justice Center as a model "one stop shop" justice center for the rest of the nation to follow. "In San Diego, the run around is over. There is a central location where somebody who desperately needs help can find compassion and help," said President Bush. The President also honored San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn for his leadership and vision to create the San Diego Family Justice Center. The President stated the City Attorney recognized there was a "more compassionate way to help people who have been abused."

The San Diego Family Justice Center is America's most comprehensive justice center for victims of domestic violence, bringing together under one roof the entire domestic violence units of a police department and prosecutor's office. In addition, there are 20 on-site community services that include a temporary restraining order clinic and a forensic medical unit. Prior to the San Diego Family Justice Center, families were subjected to seeking out the help on their own and traveling to dozens of places to obtain these services which were scattered all over the city.

"Our commitment to the Family Justice Center is central to my goal to make San Diego America's Safest City. We must stop domestic violence if we are going to cure so many other crime problems that plague our communities," said San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy. The Mayor praised City Attorney Casey Gwinn for leading San Diego's effort to address domestic violence issues over the last seventeen years.

"Most importantly, we are seeing domestic violence murders continue to decline. We have gone from 30 domestic violence homicides in the City in 1985 to 9 last year, to 4 as of this year," said City Attorney Casey Gwinn.

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### President Bush/SD Family Justice Center

President Bush announced the President's "Family Justice Center Initiative" in a speech at the White House at 3:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time. Over 150 business and domestic violence prevention leaders from around the country were on hand for the President's public policy address. The City Attorney and Assistant City Attorney Gael Strack were present at the White House for the President's announcement.

The President's Family Justice Center Initiative is a three-year pilot project that will initially award \$20-million in federal grants for the development of 12 comprehensive "one stop shop" Family Justice Centers modeled after the Family Justice Center in San Diego which opened its doors October 10, 2002. The President's Initiative will be led by the Department of Justice. "We have now geographically co-located 120 dedicated professionals from across San Diego that work in the field of domestic violence intervention and prevention, including on and off site staff from 40 private, non-profit social service agencies," said San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn.

Since its opening, the San Diego Family Justice Center has had site visitors from over 35 states and 18 countries. The number of walk-in victims have gone from 87 in the first month of operation to 636 walk-in victims last month. The number of children coming to the center with a parent has now increased to over 156 children per month.

The goal of the President's Family Justice Center Initiative is to improve access to services for victims and their children. "San Diego is the first major city with a Family Justice Center created to help families and victims of domestic violence. Our vision is to someday expand this Center to assist victims of child abuse, elder abuse and sexual assaults," said San Diego Police Chief Bill Landsdowne.

At the same moment, the President was announcing his Family Justice Center Initiative, Mayor Murphy and Police Chief Landsdowne held a press briefing at the San Diego Family Justice Center. They thanked the staff of the Family Justice Center for their contributions and, again, recognized the City Attorney for his leadership and vision. Close to 100 staff members of the Family Justice Center were in attendance.

The national recognition by President Bush comes two days before the first year anniversary of the San Diego Family Justice Center which is located at 707 Broadway in downtown San Diego. Since its opening, the Family Justice Center has provided services, through September 30, 2003, to 5,232 victims and their children. Next week, the Center is scheduled to formally open its new Forensic Medical Unit to provide forensic medical examinations to victims of domestic violence and their children. The Forensic Medical Unit, which will be sponsored by Sharp Grossmont Hospital, will be the first of its kind in the nation to be housed in a  
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comprehensive, multi-disciplinary center, and it will be unveiled October 15.

The San Diego Family Justice Center is the vision of San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn. In 1999, then Police Chief David Bejarano embraced the vision and provided the monies to study the concept. In March 2002, the California Endowment challenged the City to build the Family Justice Center and awarded San Diego a \$500,000 challenge grant. In April 2002, the Mayor and City Council accepted the challenge and approved the financial plan to create the Family Justice Center.

In addition, just this summer, Camp Hope became a reality. Camp Hope is a central part of the vision for the San Diego Family Justice Center. It will be the first specialized camping facility in America targeted at victims of family violence and their children. The camp focuses on healing a child's emotional wounds caused by the trauma of domestic violence. The first facility to be operated by Camp Hope is located at Lake Sutherland in eastern San Diego County. This past summer, children from domestic violence and child abuse shelters enjoyed kayaking, canoeing, wakeboarding, tubing, fishing, hiking, and a host of other activities at Camp Hope under the supervision of dedicated professional staff and volunteers. The dream for Camp Hope includes building a main lodge and cabins at Lake Sutherland and developing additional camping facilities at other sites in San Diego County including a dude ranch and an ATV/Motocross camp.

In June of this year, the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation was created to begin a capital campaign for the creation of regional Family Justice Centers across the County and to assist in raising operating monies for the current downtown center. The San Diego Family Justice Center's Annual Gala is scheduled for October 25, 2003 at the Manchester Hyatt Regency in downtown San Diego.

For more information about opportunities to support the San Diego Family Justice Center and Camp Hope, call the Foundation at 619-533-8277 or visit [www.familyjusticecenter.org](http://www.familyjusticecenter.org).

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